

## THE WAR FOR THE UNION.

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## FROM FORTRESS MONROE.

From our Special Correspondent.

OLD POINT COMFORT, June 13, 1861.

Judging from the remarks of Northern journals re-

ceived this morning, the movement of Sunday

nigh upon the Bethels is generally misunderstood.

The forces at both Big and Little Bethel, as they were

at daylight Saturday morning, were accurately counted

by a spy from the fortress, and even the names of the

more prominent officers were duly reported here, with

a full knowledge of the state of affairs, and that there

was a battery at Amity Creek, of what strength had

not been ascertained, and which was so ingeniously

concealed as to defy the scrutiny of the scouts, and

most of the guns of which must have been mounted

during Saturday and Sunday. Gen. Butler ordered an

attack, not upon Big Bethel, but upon the Little church

side of the creek. The two expeditions—from

Newport News and from Hampton—were to march at

hours named, and were to join at a fixed time de-

signated in the plan of attack, which is now on file at

Gen. Butler's office, in the handwriting of Theodore

Winthrop—the watchword "Boston" was announced,

and Townsend's men were ordered to wear a white

cloth upon the arm, so that they might be known.

These orders could not be misunderstood, for each com-

mander was furnished with a copy of the plan of

attack, which was moreover explained by and to each

by one of the staff. The main object of the enterprise

was to surprise Little Bethel. In pursuance of the

plan, Mr. Wm. O. Fiske, whose bearing throughout

the whole was worthy of a veteran, had

proceeded on the road with a company of scouts, and

followed Washburn's detachment from Newport News,

under the orders, with an accuracy which could not be

exceeded. Bendix had been stationed with his reserves

at the fork of the roads and at the precise time when

appeared, Col. Townsend's regiment marched up to

the fork, within 100 yards, and halted. Lieutenant

George H. Butler, the General's nephew and A. D. C.,

who was in advance with the artillery, distinctly

saw Bendix's reserves, three hundred, flanked out on

the road, and the rest visible through the foliage, and

heard the order given "Load, men; load, quick!"

The person giving the order wore a straw hat and blue

ribbon.

This, with the giving of the order, without

hooting the battle-cry "Boston," convinced Butler

that the fire was from the Rebels. General

Peirce took the same view, and immediately

dashed to the rear to give an order to fall back.

In much less time than it takes to read this paragraph,

the firing was commenced by Bendix, and the result

is well known. Of course, all hopes of surprise were

dashed by this criminal blunder, and it would seem

to have been the duty of the commanders to return; at

any rate, it was this was the chief cause of the

disasters of the day. But there was another cause.

A spy who had been 15 years a soldier in the United

States Army, and who was detected in his nefarious

business by a female servant of Gen. Butler's house-

hold, communicated the fact of the contemplated march

and attack, to the enemy, on Sunday night. The delay

caused by the blunder at the fork of the roads, gave

time to complete preparations, and to bring, as is now

ascertained, reinforcements from Yorktown. This

traitor, happily, is now in the guardhouse of the

fortress.

The next at Little Bethel having been destroyed by

Durkee, the service upon which the expedition was

ordered was completed. It was then a question of

expediency to be decided by Gen. Peirce and his Colonels

whether or not to proceed further. He did proceed;

how, and with what success, need not be written here.

These minute details, embracing the recital of some

things which perhaps it were better not to put into

print, furnish a complete vindication of Major-General

Butler from the charge of a lack of care or ability in

planning the expedition. The fierceness of the assault

on him by a certain New-York journal perhaps justifies

though, in fact, it may not call for this recital of

facts, which, with those whose good opinion is worth

having, will, I am confident, prove sufficient.

Yesterday, Capt. H. E. Davies, jr., of Co. C, in

Col. Durkee's regiment, made a visit with a flag of

truce to Yorktown. Tuesday evening he received or-

ders from Gen. Butler to proceed with a flag of truce to

the scene of the recent conflict, to look after the dead,

wounded and missing. Lieut. C. H. Seaman, of Co. C,

and Assistant-Surgeon Martin, were detailed to accom-

pany him. Starting early Wednesday morning, they

proceeded as far as Newmarket Bridge, which they

found partially destroyed, and which they repaired so

as to pass over. On arriving within a mile of Great

Bethel, they were stopped by a guard commanded by

Capt. Early, of the Virginia forces. On learning the

object of the visit, Capt. Davies was informed that Col.

Magruder, commander of the Virginia forces, had left

and gone back to Yorktown, and that it would be neces-

sary to see him there. Although he was informed that

a number of our men were in that vicinity wounded,

Capt. D. was not permitted to see them, but was re-

quired to proceed at once to Yorktown, twenty miles

further on. An escort of four men and a sergeant was

furnished, and the party immediately set out. They

were not permitted to take the usual route, but after pro-

ceeding along the Yorktown road for a mile they struck

off into the woods by a by-path, which, at frequent in-

tervals, was defended by barricades of fallen trees and

other contrivances. Pursuing this path three or four

miles they took the main road again and proceeded to

Yorktown.

About half a mile outside of the fortifications at

Yorktown, they were halted at a cavalry camp, where

they remained till word was sent to Col. Magruder of

their arrival. This officer soon came to where they

were, and received Capt. Davies and his party with

politeness and consideration. Col. Magruder, on hear-

ing that Capt. D. purposed an exchange of prisoners,

said that he desired an opportunity to see the wounded,

said that he would reply by letter to Gen. Butler, but

refused to allow Capt. D. to visit either the wounded

or prisoners, saying that they were within his lines,

information might be obtained prejudicial to his in-

terested operations.

Capt. Davies remained nearly four hours at the

quarters of Col. Hill's Regiment, where he and his

party were hospitably entertained. Leaving the camp

at 4 p. m., under an escort of Capt. Phillips and two

men, they were conducted by a different route through

the woods to the vicinity of Great Bethel, and from

thence by the regular route to Newmarket Bridge,

which was the limit of the enemy's outposts. Capt.

Davies and his party then proceeded to Hampton alone,

and arrived in camp near midnight.

The opinion of Capt. Davies, in which those who

accompanied him coincide, is, that the force of the

enemy on the day of the battle at Great Bethel, was at

least three regiments; that they were reinforced during

the day; that their battery was constructed with skill

and deliberation, and that the number of guns in pos-

session was at least ten, and that probably it was greater.

All information concerning the killed and wounded on

their side was studiously withheld from Capt. Davies.

Capt. D. was informed that those of our men who

had fallen into the hands of the enemy, wounded and

dead, had been properly cared for; that the wounded

two, as he understood, were receiving proper attention,

and that the dead, of whom there were two, had been

properly buried. Among these was Major Winthrop,

who fell gallantly charging on the enemy. Captain D.

was given the spurs, cap, and note-book of the deceased,

which, with the watch of the deceased, will be for-

warded by Gen. Butler to his friends. Capt. Davies

very properly abstains from giving any opinion of the

strength of the enemy at Yorktown, based on what

he saw and heard, as that might be deemed an abuse

of the flag of truce.

Nothing certain is known whether the Rebels have

evacuated or are strengthening themselves at Great

Bethel. The better opinion is that they have fled. It

is pretty well ascertained, however, that they have

constructed batteries at different points on the Yorktown

road.

To-day a flag of truce came from Col. Magruder in

response to the one sent out yesterday. The bearer

was halted at the outer pickets at Hampton,

and communicated with Gen. Butler by letter, who re-

plied in the same way.

George Lougee, of Bradford, Va., died in the hospital

to-day. His complaint was measles, terminating in

quick consumption. The wounded are doing well, and

the list of invalids is small in proportion to the total

number of men encamped here.

A man is now in custody, against whom the evidence

is strong, suspected of conveying evidence to the enemy,

so that they were informed of the starting of the late

expedition, and of the approach of our troops. Should

the evidence be sufficient to establish his guilt, his

punishment will not be light. It is not improbable that

the enemy has been kept fully informed of everything

going on here by spies and traitors.

The two men belonging to Col. Carr's regiment,

convicted of stealing, and outrageously abusing

citizens, were to-day drummed out of their regiment,

and through the brigade, with halloo round their necks

and the word "thief" placarded on their backs. Captain

Cassidy's company, to which they belonged, refused to

parade with the regiment on the occasion, and cheered

the culprits when they passed. It is likely to prove a

serious matter for those engaged in the transaction, for

the interest of the service requires that they should be

promptly and severely dealt with; nor is Gen. Butler

the man to allow such an offense to go without proper

punishment.

I have been through the camps to-day, and I can

bear witness to the fact that our men are in the best of

spirits, and eager to wipe out the unpleasant narrative

of the affair at Great Bethel. The experience has

done them good. They have had a taste of conflict,

they have gained confidence in themselves, and only

wish to be properly placed in the field. They will go

anywhere that a leader, in whom they have confidence,

will lead, and undertake any thing that such a man

will say they ought to undertake. The result is, that

feeling, and it denotes a high general morale which

promises everything when the conditions shall be re-

alized. Gen. Butler does not doubt the courage or

steadiness of his troops; and I know that they regard

him with that confidence which a commander would

wish to have extended to him, and which is the pre-

requisite to success. Of the future, and the probable

plans of Gen. Butler, it would be manifestly improper

to speak more specifically than to say that they have

in no manner been interfered with by the affair of the

9th, and that they will be proceeded with that degree

of energy and caution for which Gen. Butler is distin-

guished.

I understand that Gen. Pierce shields himself from

censure by censuring others, and by attributing to com-

manders of regiments a disposition not to advance but

to favor an opposite policy. There is abundant evi-

dence, however, going to establish his inefficiency, his

lack of capacity to command on the field, and his gen-

eral unimpaired conduct. I will not say that others did

not exhibit, to a certain extent, some of these qualities

also; at the same time there were Captains and Lieu-

tenants in the action, who by deeds of bravery proved

themselves to be a thousand times his superior, both in

personal courage and that genius inseparable to success

in the field. He certainly must retire. And a New-

York Brigadier should be sent to command the New-

York regiments, of which there are eight now here.

The placing of an unknown and unrecognized Mas-

sachusetts Brigadier over them did not do a little to

demoralize the camp, and no one thing would do more

to promote its morale as the presence of a New-York

Brigadier of recognized capacity. The subject is of

sufficient importance to entitle it to immediate atten-

tion.

THE BETHEL SKIRMISH.

Correspondence of The N. Y. Tribune.

CAMP HAMILTON, FORTRESS MONROE, VA.,

June 11, 1861.

On Sunday, the 9th inst., four regiments, two from

this point (the 3d New-York Volunteers, Col. Town-

send, and the 5th, Col. Durkee), and two from New-

port News, were ordered by Brigadier-General Pierce

to march toward a place called Great Bethel, about

eleven miles from Hampton village, where he had

learned that a considerable force of the enemy was

fortified, and to make a reconnaissance of their position

and force. About eleven o'clock on Sunday night the

two regiments from this camp were summoned by the</